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The Extraordinary Collapse of Jatropha as a Global Biofuel

by Dr Promode Kant, Director, Institute of Green Economy, New Delhi and Dr Wu Shuirong, Associate Professor, Chinese Academy of Forestry, Beijing

An ambitious biofuel program initiated in 2003 by the Planning Commission of India, envisaging 30% mandatory blending of diesel by 2020, involved raising *Jatropha curcas* on wastelands across India. In mobilizing millions of lowest income farmers and landless poor with the promise of high returns, the Commission may have relied too heavily on the opinion of one of its top functionories, who expected an internal rate of return ranging from 19 to 28% even though past experiences firmly indicated otherwise. The extremely high profile of the program attracted worldwide attention, and it was quickly adopted by China and a large number of Asian and African countries. By 2008, Jatropha had already been planted on over 900,000 hectares globally and is expected to be planted on over 12.8 million ha by 2015.

But it has failed to deliver almost everywhere, causing distress to millions of small farmers worldwide. It appears to be an extreme case of a well-intentioned, top-down climate mitigation approach undertaken without adequate research, and adopted in good faith by other countries, gone completely awry.

As climate mitigation and adaptation activities intensify, attracting large investments, there is danger of such lapses becoming more frequent unless "due diligence" is institutionalized and appropriate protocols developed to avoid conflict of interest of research organizations. As an immediate step, an international body like the FAO may have to intervene to stop further extension of Jatropha in new areas without adequate research inputs.

ACS Journal of Environmental Science & Technology.
The article can be accessed from the journal website http://pubs.acs.org/journal/esthag
Sent by Institute of Green Economy (IGREC)

The controversial Jatropha curcas: The much hyped miracle plant has failed globally as an alternative to fossil fuel *Photo: F. Kagema*

Oil Seed Company Pulls Out of the Tana Delta

The biodiversity rich eco system of the Tana Delta: Nature Kenya's advocacy efforts have finally paid off with the withdrawal of a commercial developer. *Photo: J. Retief*

The UK based G4 Industries, a company awarded a licence to cultivate oil and seed crops, has pulled out of the Tana River Delta, citing technical issues with the soil type, long term climate change effects and mismanagement of the Delta's resources.

G4 Industries noted that where they had expected to find rich alluvial soil, there was mostly sandy or clay soils. In particular, the soils were poor in the area where the company had been able to build a dam to store rain water for irrigation. G4 Industries also cited climate change predictions that the climate in the Delta would become hotter and drier.

Nature Kenya had long cited scientific evidence that commercial plantations were unlikely to thrive in the Delta's climatic conditions. An initial economic study shows that a master plan integrating sustainable management of existing agriculture, ranching and fishing with a conservation-focused future development, could generate more income and better livelihoods than commercial plantations.

"Conservation success is hard to come by. Now one of the companies, G4 Industries, has confirmed pulling out. This is just but a small step in ensuring that biodiversity in this country is safeguarded and local communities aren't taken advantage of by developers with false promises of economic prosperity," said Paul Matiku, Executive Director of Nature Kenya.

Local communities from the Tana Delta currently have a case at the High Court, requesting that all development projects be stopped until a Development and Conservation Master Plan is agreed and their land rights are taken into consideration.

Committees & Projects 2010 Report

Important Bird Area Programme

- Basic manitaring at 61 IBAs; detailed monitaring at 11 IBAs
- 2009 IBA Status and Trends report published
- Ten Management Plans developed for IBAs
- Enviranmental educatian at 10 sites

Committees (special interest working groups)

Insect Committee

- Warking an draganfly, butterfly and bee baak
- On-gaing identification of insects
- Nairobi Nat'l Park butterfly poster
- Nairabi Museum pallinator garden in place
- Good progress with pollinator project

(Questions abaut insects?: contact insects@naturekenya.arg)

Honey bee busy feeding on pollen. The insect committee has set up a pollinator garden on the museum grounds to help in pollination Image: NK archive

Herpetofauna Working Group

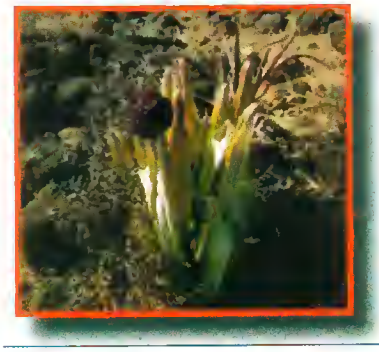
- Public Outreach to students and the local community in Sagalla, March 2011, about caecilians - amphibians that are worm-like, burrowing and highly secretive
- Fundamentals of Herpetology course each year

Plant Committee

- Checklist af plants of City Park published; anline publicatian ongaing
- Interesting record at City Park of *Parthenium hysteropharus* - the highest ranking noxious weed in the country, rampant in black cotton soils and poisonous to human and animals

Succulenta East Africa

- Weekend trip to Lake Bogoria
- Camping weekend in the Malepo Hills sauth of Kajiada
- Garden visit in Muthaiga
- AGM in June 2010 - Green Park, Naivasha



A succulent plant in an arid area. Succulenta East Africa is devoted to growing and learning about such plants that store water in their tissues to survive periods of drought.
Photo: NK Archive

Mammal Committee

- Initial stages of developing a 'Mammal Atlas af Kenya' based an:
  - Spatial data
  - Callection recards
  - Pictarial recards
  - Expert nates
- Developing a Fundraising praposal far the Atlas

A pair of Waterbucks: The Mammal Committee seeks to conserve Kenya's mammals through information dissemination. *Photo: NK Archive*

Youth Committee

- Outings and camping trips far members
- Clean ups at the Nairobi Arboretum & City Park
- Tree planting with Kenya Airways - April 2011 at the Ngong Hills
- Planting tussack grass with Friends of Kinangop Plateau

The Youth Committee planting tussocks at the recently purchased Leleshwa Nature Reserve. *Photo: M. Nzisa*

HARI - Habitat Restoration Initiative Of Eastern Africa

Approach in restorating of degraded habitats:

- Reconnaissance survey in Kibauni hill, Mwala in June 2010
- Propasals to restare the hill develaped; awaiting respanse

Bird Committee

- Checklist of the Birds af Sabaki Estuary published
- Scapus Volume 30 published
- Activities include advocacy against the pesticide Furadan, upgrading Kenya Birdfinder, and entering Kenyabirdsnet records in the Kenya Birdfinder database
- Celebrated Int'l Migratary Bird Day and Int'l Vulture Awareness Day

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Committees & Projects 2010 Report

Samaki Working Group
Organised outings to study fish

ELPWiG - Environmental Legislation and Policy Working Group
Provides advice to Nature Kenya on policy and legislation

Editorial Committees:
Journal Editorial Committee
Publishes the Journal of East African Natural History, jointly with the National Museums of Kenya

Upland Kenya Wild Flowers Publication Committee
Formed in 2011 to publish the 3rd edition of Upland Kenya Wild Flowers by Andrew Agnew

Projects
Friends Of City Park
- Monthly nature walks ongoing
- Regular environmental clean ups
- Monthly newsletter
- Environmental programmes to institutions and organisations
- Public awareness through celebration of events and environmental days

The Nature Maze at City Park, Nairobi: The Friends of City Park is helping to conserve and improve a natural site in an urban setting. Photo: M. Nzisa

Friends Of Nairobi Arboretum
- Advancing public awareness and education on forests and environment through:
  - Regular tree walks
  - Monthly lectures
  - Interpretation services for groups including schools and other visitors
  - Newsletter (Tree News)
  - Compost and gardening course
- Supporting Kenya Forest Service to implement the Forest Act 2005
  - Development of Arboretum management plan ongoing
  - Representation in the Forest Conservation Committee

Nairobi Biodiversity Parks
- Original site is lost.
- Study in Nairobi National Park ongoing.

Partner
Tropical Biology Association

A young bioloist in the field. TBA provides high standard of ecology and conservation training to biologists in Africa and Europe. Usually, it runs three or four course per year. Photo: TBA

Working to build expertise in ecology & conservation
- With Nature Kenya, launched an EU funded programme to build capacity of African Environmental Scientists
  - 92 scientists trained during 5 workshops in 2010
- Ran 3 field courses in Africa, and 1 in Borneo, Malaysia
  - 1321 biologists from 65 countries trained on 58 courses
  - 172 received Nature Kenya & JEANH subscriptions
- Continued targeted follow up of African biologists
  - Supported 33 Masters level scholarship
  - Catalysed established of 13 Alumni groups across Africa

Go out and Look!
at the Evening Sky

Fleur Ng'weno

Choose an evening with no clouds or few clouds, and look up at the dark sky after sunset. Can you find the moon, stars and planets as mentioned below?

Planets, Sept 2011
The brilliant planet Venus reappears in the sunset during September. Saturn, a steady golden light, is in the western sky at the start of the month. It moves towards the horizon during September, coming close to Venus at month's end. Look for the two planets and slender crescent moon on Sept 28 and 29. Saturn passes Venus and sinks into the sunset.

Bright Jupiter rises in the east at about 10 pm in early September, and is in the west at dawn. The moon is near Jupiter on Sept 16. By month's end, Jupiter is visible most of the night.

September Stars
The constellation of the Scorpion *(See August Nature Net)* is still prominent in the southwest. Its bright reddish star Antares is near the moon on Sept 4. In the south, left of the Scorpion, there is a group of eight bright stars. Imagine a teapot shape, or a basket with a handle. To the ancient Greeks this was Sagittarius, the Archer. The bright star Fomalhaut is still further left, in the southeast.

High in the northeast, almost overhead, is the bright star Altair. It seems to be escorted by two fainter stars. Halfway between Altair and the northern horizon is the brilliant white star Vega. It's in a tiny constellation called the Lyre. To the right (east) of Vega is another bright star, Deneb. Altair, Deneb and Vega form an enormous triangle in the northern sky.

Moon, Sept 2011
4 Sept: first quarter - "half" moon overhead at sunset. 12 Sept: full moon, rises in the east at sunset. 20 Sept: last quarter - "half" moon overhead at sunrise. 27 Sept: new moon.

in the field

SEP 2011: TO DO LIST

Sep 3 FoCP Nature Walk
Sep 7 Morning Birdwalk
Sep 10 FONA Tree Walk
Sep 14 Morning Birdwalk
Sep 18 Sunday birdwatch
Sep 21 Morning Birdwalk
Sep 24 Day Trip to Ol Donyo Sabuk
Sep 26 FONA Tree Walk
Sep 28 Morning Birdwalk
Sep 29 FONA Public Lecture
Bird ringing every Tuesday morning at 8 a.m. (check with Ornithology section, National Museums)

Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet EVERY WEEK at 8:45 am in the Museum staff car park. The entrance is on Kipande Road.

Sunday Birdwatch (also called "Pot-luck Outings") meet the THIRD Sunday of each month at 9:00 am at the same location. Bring lunch.

Mombasa Birdwalks Contact Taibali Hamzali through <thamzali@gmail.com> or call 0733980540 for more information.

Contact the office for information on other birdwalks in Kakamega, Kisumu, and other sites
Ngong Forest walks - 1st and 3rd Saturday at 9.00 a.m. Contact Simon 0729-840715

Do you love nature excursions?
Join a day trip to Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park on 24th Sept 2011.
Come enjoy birdwatching, montane landscape, hiking & visit an unusual burial site, McMillan grave
Meet at Nairobi National Museum opposite Botanical Garden offices on 24th Sept 2011 at 7:00am.
Participants to provide their own transport, pay entry fees and contribute to the guide fee.
Bring your picnic lunch, drinking water, binoculars, camera, hat & guidebooks.
For more information and planning, contact:
Norman Kiboi on 020-353756, 0739-200216 or email: office@naturekenya.org

Nature Kenya/ National Museums Library Update

The joint East Africa Natural History Society – National Museums of Kenya Library is one of your membership benefits.
It recently received new books, CDs and DVDs.
Visit the Library and be part of the Library of the Year Award competition organized by the Goethe Institut, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and Kenya Library Association

Yes! Start my Nature Kenya membership

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